



December 2016

How to Get a Great Night's Sleep



While we all want to “settle in for a long winter’s nap” at the end of the day, many people find sleep does not come easily, does not last long enough, or is interrupted frequently. These sleep issues can

have very serious effects on our health.

Here are some tips to getting a good night sleep. If you still have problems with your sleep, or routinely find yourself feeling sleepy or irritable during the day, see your doctor. You may have a sleep disorder that can be treated.

- * **Stick to a Regular Sleep Schedule** – Yes, it can be hard to do, but going to bed and getting up at the same time every day is really important. *This includes weekends!*
- * **Set Up a Good Sleeping Environment** – Bedrooms should be dark. Remove sleep distractions like bright lights, TVs, computers, or an uncomfortable bed. Try using ear plugs, white noise, blackout blinds, or an eye mask. And, keep the temperature on the cool side.
- * **Avoid Stimulants Like Caffeine and Nicotine** – The caffeine in things like coffee, chocolate, tea, and colas, can last for up to 8 hours. The nicotine in tobacco products also has a negative effect on your sleep.
- * **Avoid Alcohol Before Bed** – Alcohol may help you fall asleep, but it keeps you in light sleep, so you tend to wake up when its calming effects wear off.
- * **Exercise, but Time it Right** – Daily exercise can help you sleep better. But do not do it later than 2-3 hours before bedtime.
- * **Relax Before Bed** – Allow yourself time to wind down. Try reading or listening to music. Enjoy a hot bath or shower before bed to help you feel sleepy. Avoid watching TV or using the computer close to the time you want to fall asleep.

- * **Don't Take Work to Bed** – Try to leave work at work. If you find it is hard to turn your mind off at night, try writing down your thoughts or worries; make a list of what you need to do the next day. This can clear your mind, allowing you to fall asleep more easily.
- * **Get Daily Sunlight Exposure** – This helps your sleep pattern. Aim for at least 30 minutes each day.
- * **Avoid Big Meals and Excess Fluids Later at Night** – This can lead to indigestion/heartburn, as well as the need to get up and urinate. Both will disturb your sleep.
- * **Avoid Medications that Delay or Disrupt Sleep** – Both prescription and over-the-counter meds can negatively impact sleep. Talk with your doctor if you are having issues.
- * **Don't Nap After 3:00 p.m.** – A nap may improve your thinking, but taking it too late in the afternoon can make getting to sleep at bedtime harder. Limit naps to less than one hour.
- * **Don't Lie Awake in Bed** – If you cannot fall back asleep in 20-30 minutes, get up and go to a different room. Try quiet, relaxing, activities like reading, or listening to music until you feel sleepy. Just lying there getting frustrated that you can't sleep will only make falling asleep harder.



Nutrition Nook

If your holiday plans take you out to eat, consider this - for fewer calories, less sodium and lower saturated fat:

- ◆ Order a lunch-size portion at dinner, or
- ◆ Split a regular size main course. It is the season of sharing after all.



Toy and Gift Safety

national SAFE
toy and gift month



A big part of the Holiday Season is giving children toys. Take a few minutes to make sure the toys you buy are safe. Here are some tips:

- Avoid toys with sharp or solid points, spikes, rods, and sharp edges.
- Be sure to read all instructions and warnings that are on, or come with, the toy.
- Keep toys meant for older children away from younger children.
- Avoid toys that fly, have parts that fly, or shoot objects. These pose a danger to all kids, especially those under age 5. BB guns should never even be considered a toy.
- Look for the letters ASTM. This means the toy meets national safety standards.
- Be sure to follow user age guidelines.
- For kids ages 2-4, do not buy toys with small parts. Such parts can be a choking hazard.
- If you are buying riding toys like bikes, skateboards and scooters, be sure to get the correct size for the child and include a helmet and other safety equipment with it.

To keep up with product safety recalls, sign up for email alerts from **Safe Kids Worldwide**: <https://www.safekids.org/product-recalls>



How to Pick Home Exercise Equipment

With the holidays here and the New Year on the horizon, you might be thinking this is the year to buy a piece of home exercise equipment. Here are some suggestions for making your choice a good one:

- ◆ A piece of home exercise equipment can make getting that workout easier than going to the gym. But don't expect that it will automatically change your habits. If you're not active right now, get going – even before you invest in that new bike or treadmill.
- ◆ Cable TV is full of infomercials promoting the latest piece of exercise equipment that promises easy, quick, effortless changes in your fitness and appearance, or that will target those “problem areas.” Unfortunately you don't get a fit and healthy body without effort and some sweat. Beware, don't fall for gimmicks.
- ◆ What do you like doing? Do you have health issues such as knee problems that should be considered when making your decision? Be sure to:
 - Check out consumer ratings and product reviews.
 - Do a test ride – get on the machine at the store, or on a similar machine at the gym, to be sure it works for you.
- ◆ Cardio equipment helps you burn calories and fat. Some examples include:
 - Stationary bikes – no training needed and easy on your joints but seats can be uncomfortable if ridden for long periods.
 - Rowing machines – low-impact and provides a full body workout. But they can be hard on backs. Choose pulley models over piston ones.
 - Elliptical trainers – another nearly impact-free machine. Usually allow you to use your arms too.
 - Treadmills – allow you to walk or run indoors, so no weather excuses. Choose a motorized model with a strong motor. Some have flexible decks which reduces the impact on your joints.

Whatever type of equipment you choose, be sure to learn how to use it properly to prevent injuries that may keep you from working out.